DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 172 326 EA 011 654

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TITLE Illinois Politics of Education: A Case Study of Symbolism and Bargaining.
PUB DATE 10 Apr 79
NOTE 39p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, California, April 8-12, 1979); Tables I and II may be marginally legible

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Finance; Elementary Secondary Education; *Finance Reform; Language Usage; *Political Attitudes; Political Influences; Politics; State Legislation; *Symbolic Language
IDENTIFIERS *Illinois; Politics of Education

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the political processes involved in the preparation and passage in 1973 of a school finance reform package in Illinois. The author places particular emphasis on how language was used to promote support for the legislation, how partisan politics affected voting patterns in the legislature on this issue, and how legislators depended on the advice of experts among their colleagues in making their decisions. The study reviews the literature relevant to the use of language in policy-setting and to the nature of political structures and processes in Illinois. A historical account of the development of the legislation is presented and the types of pressures placed on the legislators are discussed. The results of the study imply that educational finance reform is a political issue and can be treated pragmatically as such, and that different types of language (including hortatory, legal, administrative, and bargaining, each with different degrees of specificity) are appropriate at different points in the political process. (Author/PGD)

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ILLINOIS POLITICS OF EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF SYMBOLISM AND BARGAINING

A paper presented to the 1979 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

April 10, 1979

by
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BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Politicians have known for centuries that, by addressing the public with non-specific language, they could lead the general public to believe that the beliefs and policy positions of the speaker and the audience were the same. It has not been generally recognized that they could communicate with their colleagues in this manner as well. In Illinois, for example, the responsibility for expertise in complex issues such as school finance is delegated by the Legislature to a commission and to a few legislators. Most legislators are therefore as uninformed and as susceptible to the use of symbolic language on a given issue as is the general public. Abstract terms with no concrete reference points can be used to garner votes for a specific piece of complex legislation, about which most legislators will not be knowledgeable.

While the words used by politicians may have the desired effect because of their symbolic meaning, the resulting legislation must be expressed through the use of precise, legalistic language. Although particular parts of some legislation may be subject to legal or administrative interpretation, the impact of new laws, including the benefits and liabilities to the individuals or groups affected, is in most cases clear because tangible resources have been allocated or reallocated in a specific way.

The central purpose of this research was to observe and analyze the political aspects of the process of state level decision-making concerning issues in public education. The specific issue which was examined was the reform in the financing of education in Illinois in the 1970's. The central questions were (1) why the reform took

place when it did, and (2) why the substance of the final product was what it was.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The study encompassed a large number of research areas including state legislative politics, the politics of education, interest group politics, school finance reform, Illinois politics, and public budgetary politics. As a result of this complexity, only selected parts of the reviewed literature are discussed.

In his essay on the politics of American education, Peterson (1974) suggested that two lines of research have been followed in analyzing the politics of education at the state level. One type of study has viewed the issue in terms of group politics, which deals with the formation of coalitions and their subsequent movement towards agreement. The other type of study has focused on policy output analysis and is quantitatively oriented. This study will be more in line with the group politics tradition and uses some of the ideas and concepts of the group politics literature.

Two of the most respected examples of research in the area of the politics of education at the state level are a study of the politics of education in Illinois, Missouri, and Michigan by Masters, Salisbury, and Eliot (1964) and a study by Bailey et al. (1962) of the politics of education in the northeastern states. Both are studies of the actors and strategies in educational politics.

Bailey et al. defined politics as a fashioning of coalitions of influence to determine the values to be implemented by government.

With this definition as a starting point, these researchers proceeded to identify the major actors and groups of actors--both supporters and opponents--who comprised the coalitions concerned with policy relating to state aid for education. The roles and motivations of these actors were examined, and the strategy for coalition-building was observed. The authors' conclusion was that the success of schoolmen in politics depended on their political skills and the successful performance of four types of leaders--intellectuals, representatives of private interests, bureaucrats, and political actors. In most cases the political energizer who recognized the problem and conceptualized it in terms of policy was the intellectual leader, or the academic, a term used by Bailey et al. to denote the university scholar.

In the study by Masters et al., Illinois was found to be a state with structural consensus, embodied in the composition and responsibilities of the School Problems Commission. The authors of this study concluded that the Commission acted as the intermediary body between the education interests and the legislature. They found that, within this body, policy and legislation were drafted with the participation of education interests and legislators represented on the Commission. Their study, which examined the origin and the nature of the School Problems Commission and the manner in which it became a coalitional, consensus-oriented body, provided an explanation of the way in which the Commission drafted legislation which had a high probability of becoming law. According to Masters et al. if a recommendation came from the Commission, the General Assembly passed it with little or no modification.

Using several studies of group politics at the state level, Iannaccone (1967) developed a typology of the linkages between various states' education interest groups and their state legislature. He classified each of the states where data were available according to the type of linkage which they represented. Illinois was characterized as having the most developed type of linkage, the state-wide syndical type, which the School Problems Commission embodied. Since the legislators and the education interests met within this legislatively-created body, the education interests had a formal voice in education decisions. Due to the make-up of this body, it was the major, if not sole, important education decision-making group in Illinois. According to Iannaccone, if major education legislation in Illinois was not initiated by or approved by the Commission before being presented to the General Assembly, the legislation would be successfully opposed by the Commission.

In summary, the work of Bailey et al. concluded that, for educators to reach their goals, there must be coalitions and unity among the schoolmen with four types of leaders. Masters et al. maintained that the School Problems Commission was a model of unity because of its structure. Iannaccone noted that the four types of leaders were integrated into the membership of the School Problems Commission. These researchers found that the Commission was the major actor in any significant education legislation in Illinois, attaining its goals through the formation of coalitions and the development of consensus.

While the notions put forth in the above literature provided useful background about school finance in Illinois and were helpful in generating certain questions concerning school finance reform, they did not provide a comprehensive framework for approaching the events culminating in the

passage of school finance legislation in Illinois in 1973. The traditional idea of coalitions in education policy-making was not sufficient to explain the situation of 1973. Consequently, literature in the area of politics in general, not limited to education, was examined. The work of Murray Edelman (1964) was utilized as the basis for the conceptual development of the study.

In contrast to other scholars using the coalition analysis approach to the study of political decision-making, Edelman suggested that policy which is formulated on at least two levels, the symbolic level and the level of formal political decision-making, results in the distribution of tangible resources. He indicated that these two levels are not mutually exclusive and that there is, in fact, usually a combination of the two levels in any given political situation with one or the other level being dominant.

Edelman pointed out that policy formulation involves both the way things are and the way they seem. He hypothesized the existence of what he termed the symbolic level of politics and then used literature from the social and behavioral sciences to document the fact that different people perceive the reality of events differently. Edelman has added to the literature of political decision-making the concept of the symbolic level of political behavior which emphasizes the fact that the general public does not always perceive political actions as they really are.

Edelman asserted that symbolism in the world of politics serves the function of promoting quiescence, or public apathy. The symbolic forms which Edelman cited as promoting quiescence in the general

public include myths, rituals, settings, and language, although some of these forms will not appear in a given political situation.

A myth may be defined as "an ill-founded belief held uncritically by an interested group." Edelman expanded this definition, which comes close to his usage of the word, by offering an explanation of the reasons myths exist. Myths promote quiescence; in other words, they diffuse or suppress opposition by replacing this opposition with satisfaction and therefore with lack of interest in political action. Myths are usually unquestioned, widely believed, and have consequences other than those proclaimed. Myths exist in spite of facts that would promote contrary beliefs, because people want to believe the myth.

Language is another symbolic form which Edelman found useful in analyzing policy formation. He specified four styles of language: hortatory, legal, administrative, and bargaining. Hortatory language is designed to persuade the masses to support a given policy. It gives the impression that the opinions held by the general public are really important and that rational thinking and a review of the facts will lead to the appropriate decision. It is very ambiguous language, suitable for taking on ascribed meanings. Examples of this type of language are terms such as public interest, parity, and reform, which mean different things to different people.

Legal language, used in statutes, constitutions, and contracts, is basically ambiguous, flexible language that in the final analysis means what the interpretor says it means. An example of the flexibility of legal language is that, when laws are tested in the courts after their passage, they are interpreted in various fashions.

Another characteristic of language used for symbolic purposes is the perception of "verb" processes as "noun" entities. Edelman suggested that this unites the public in their response to the process in question. For example, if equalization is a phenomenon that people believe exists, they can rally behind it or unite in opposition to it, at least on an emotional level. This word usage means that equalization could become possible through the passage of a piece of legislation.

The language used in dealing with the distribution of tangible resources is different from the language which is used at the symbolic level. Edelman suggested that two types of language are used in practical politics. The first type, administrative language, consists of a specialized form of jargon, is intended to be understood by occupants of administrative roles, and is perceived by the general public to be impenetrable by outsiders. Edelman identified a second style of language which is used at the level of real political involvement and which he termed bargaining language. This second style of language, which is utterly lacking in ambiguity, is used in closed sessions, where the purpose, according to Edelman, is to make deals rather than appeals for support. In short, bargaining language is not used to convince the other party of the validity of a given position, as is hortatory language, but to persuade an adversary that a specific impasse can be resolved by such and such an accommodation.

Political Settings. Edelman clearly states that political acts must be compatible with political settings. In most cases in which policy formation is involved, the setting is a spatial and temporal one in which a set of values has been legitimized, resulting in shared norms

and assumptions. This compatibility of act and setting enables politicians to take certain political positions and explains how the political climate of the time can promote support for a compatible political act.

According to Edelman the difference between the symbolic level and the level of practical politics can be illustrated in terms of the groups which are involved and the language which is used. Groups which are involved at the symbolic level include members of the general public who, for the most part, rely on stereotyped information, are unorganized, and are influenced by myths and slogans, while the groups which participate in the political bargaining arena are highly organized, have accurate information, and are composed of relatively small numbers of people who are intensely involved in the issues which are at stake. This second type of group corresponds closely to the many well-organized, traditional interest groups which have historically been relatively small, well-informed, and motivated by definite areas of interests.

METHODOLOGY

Data were gathered from relevant documents, interviews with the participants, and from financial files of the Illinois Office of Education and the National Center for Educational Statistics.

A basic questionnaire was used in each of the interviews, although, after the first five or six interviews it became obvious which questions would be appropriate for each respondent. Time was, therefore, put to better use by not asking questions of which the interviewee would have no knowledge.

The interviews were recorded in longhand by the interviewer, who then transcribed them as soon after the interview as possible. A

guarantee of anonymity was provided, permitting the respondents to be relatively open in their responses.

The financial data from the Illinois Office of Education and the National Center for Educational Statistics were analyzed by geographical area of the state, by school district type, by property value, and by income. The variables analyzed and reported in this study were general state aid per pupil for Fiscal Years 73 and 75, expenditures per pupil for Fiscal Years 73 and 75, and operating tax rates used for Fiscal Years 73 and 75 state aid calculations. The percentage increases in the variables from Fiscal Year 73 to Fiscal Year 75 were examined as well as the change in the distribution of the money between these two years. In this way the interests that were served by the change in the formula could be seen.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

This section briefly outlines the events leading to the introduction and passage of the 1973 Reform Act.

The history of general state aid formulas in the state of Illinois includes the adoption of a Strayer-Haig type of foundation formula in 1927.[1] There were virtually no major changes in the method of funding Illinois schools until the early 1970's. The addition of a formula in 1973 based on the provision of a guaranteed tax base as an option for calculating general state aid was a part of a larger national movement of school finance reform.[2]

The Resource Equalizer concept was introduced to the School Problems Commission by Representative Gene Hoffman, Chairman of the Commission,

and Dr. Ben Hubbard of Illinois State University, Research Director of the Commission. Hubbard and his colleague, Dr. Alan Hickrod, had presented various forms of the proposed formula since 1971 to numerous groups, most recently to both the Governor's Commission on Education and the Superintendent's Advisory Committee, which were meeting to examine school finance in Illinois. It was not until just prior to the time that the Resource Equalizer was introduced to the Commission that Hoffman decided, after talking with Hubbard, to seek endorsement of the Resource Equalizer Formula by the School Problems Commission. Since the formula had been discussed in various forms for several years, the proposal was by this time well-refined, and it appeared to both Hoffman and Hubbard that it was viable technically as well as politically. Informal discussion of the Resource Equalizer Formula began among Commission members in late March, 1973. On April 3, 1973 Ben Hubbard made a presentation to the Commission members entitled "An Analysis of the Cost of Changing the Present Formula to a Resource Equalizer Formula through Four or Five Years." Included in the presentation was a copy of the proposed legislation containing a rollback requirement which provided that districts having operating tax rates over the maximum set by the formula reduce these rates until they were equal to or less than that which the formula specified as a maximum. A 25 percent limitation on the increase in state aid each year was another component of the legislation. A weighting for Title I eligible pupils based on the district concentration of such pupils compared to the state average concentration as well as a provision known as open access that allowed local school boards to raise district operating tax rates to the formula specified maximum without submitting the increase to voters in a referendum were included. In addition, there was an option which would

allow districts to continue receiving state aid under the old Strayer-Haig formula and a separate proposal for a bill allowing districts already spending more than the $1260 per Title I weighted pupil guaranteed by the formula to exceed the $1260 by 15 percent to provide funding for innovative programs. There were cost estimates for both four and five year phase-in periods, although many high school districts would require six or more years to receive their complete increase due to a combination of the large increases they qualified for and the 25 percent limitation on the amount of the increases.

The only apparent concern at that time, expressed by Senator Thomas Hynes, pertained to the long-term costs to the state of such a formula. The estimates at that time were that the formula would require between $700 and $800 million in new money to be spread over the phase-in period. Hynes was not sure that it was appropriate or wise to commit future General Assemblies to such large amounts of funding.

On April 10, the School Problems Commission met again. At this meeting Dr. Hubbard again presented the specifics of the Resource Equalizer Formula, and Donald Eslick of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction presented the formula proposed by that agency. The major change in the Resource Equalizer proposal from the prior week was the elimination of open access for all districts. The consensus among the legislators on the Commission was that the General Assembly would never agree to give what open access in essence provided, namely, unlimited taxing power to the local school boards. The formula proposed by Eslick included a reduction of qualifying rates (the tax rates necessary to participate in the equalization program) from .84 percent to .80 percent

for elementary districts and from .84 percent to .82 percent for secondary districts, an increase in the add-on (the percentage by which each state aid claim was increased after all the calculations were performed) from 19 percent to 23 percent, and a weighting factor of .45 for all Title I eligible pupils. In addition, the state agency proposal included a tax freeze for two years for unit districts with tax rates exceeding 3.00 percent and for dual districts with tax rates exceeding 2.20 percent and a revenue equalizer (which provided that equal tax rates above the specified amounts generated the same revenue in all districts regardless of the assessed valuation) for unit districts with tax rates over 2.20 percent and dual districts with tax rates above 1.40 percent.

During the week between the April 3rd meeting of the School Problems Commission and the April 10th meeting the Democratic legislators on the Commission met and decided to support the plan submitted by Eslick. The Commission members decided at the April 10th meeting not to make a recommendation or endorsement at that time and to consider the alternatives and vote at the next meeting, which was scheduled for May 1st.

By the time of the May meeting the two formula reform bills considered by the Commission had been introduced into the Legislature, and the Superintendent's Committee had issued its final report. Since both formula proposals had been discussed at length during the previous meeting, there was little debate on the merits of either proposal on May 1st. Because the decisions concerning the vote had been made prior to the meeting, the primary debate centered around the tactics of how the Commission's recommendation would be made. Representative Charles Clabaugh made a motion, which passed by a seven to six vote, primarily along partisan

lines, that the School Problems Commission endorse the Resource Equalizer proposal. A similar motion by Hynes for support of the bill proposed by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction was defeated in a reversal of the above vote. The votes may be considered primarily partisan for two reasons. In the first place, among the ten legislators and the State Superintendent who were present, the votes were along straight party lines, six Democrats to five Republicans. Velma Crain and George Wilkins, the two gubernatorially appointed lay members present, who were at least nominally Democrats, voted with the Republicans for the Resource Equalizer Formula because, according to other members of the Commission, Crain and Wilkins believed it was the better formula. The reason for the partisan split on these votes revolved around the fact that the Chairman of the Commission, who was supporting the Resource Equalizer Formula, was Republican and the opposing formula was supported by the Democratic State Superintendent. The days of non-partisanship on the Commission were in the past. The second reason the vote can be viewed as partisan is that the interests of the constituents represented by the voting legislators were not necessarily served by the votes that they cast. Examples of this are the votes of Representative Berman (Chicago) and Senators Hynes (Chicago) and Hall (East St. Louis) cast as Democrats for the Bakalis proposal, when, in fact, the Resource Equalizer would better serve their constituents by providing increased state aid to Chicago and East St. Louis.

The significance of these votes can be seen in the fact that from this point on, the Resource Equalizer bill was known as the School Problems Commission bill, just as if all seventeen members of the Commission

had endorsed it. Many votes in the General Assembly for the Resource Equalizer legislation were gained or at least legitimated as a result of this vote. Although the School Problems Commission as a whole was no longer involved in the passage of this bill, the influence of the Commission lasted through to the very end because of its endorsement of the Resource Equalizer Formula in spite of the primarily partisan division which marked the endorsement process.

The Resource Equalizer legislation was introduced into the House of Representatives as House Bill 1484 on April 12, 1973. Its sponsors at the time of introduction were Gene Hoffman (Rep.-Elmhurst), Chairman of the School Problems Commission, Charles Clabaugh (Rep.-Champaign), and Carl Soderstrom (Rep.-Streator). Harry "Buz" Yourell (Dem.-Oak Lawn) was added as a sponsor later in the session. The provisions of House Bill 1484 as it was introduced into the Legislature were the same as those included in the proposal endorsed by the School Problems Commission. To reiterate these provisions, House Bill 1484, an amendment to the School Code of Illinois, Chapter 122 of the Illinois Statutes, par. 18-8, contained (1) the specifics of a guaranteed tax base formula for distributing general state aid for education, including guaranteed assessed valuations per pupil for each type of district and maximum operating tax rates for each type of district, (2) a rollback requirement described previously, (3) a 25 percent limitation on the increase in state aid each year, (4) a variable weighting for Title I pupils based on the ratio of the concentration of such pupils in the district to the concentration of such pupils throughout the state, and (5) an option which allowed districts to continue receiving aid under the Strayer-Haig formula. This piece of

legislation, aside from the retention of the Strayer-Haig option, was a major alteration of the then-current state aid formula.

The proposal of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction was introduced into the Senate on April 14, 1973 as Senate Bill 882 along with the companion appropriations legislation, Senate Bill 883. The provisions of this formula bill, as discussed before, were as follows: (1) a reduction of qualifying rates for dual districts, (2) an increase in the add-on from 19 percent to 23 percent, (3) a .45 weighting for all Title I eligible pupils, (4) a tax freeze for two years for districts above a certain tax rate, and (5) a revenue equalizer for all districts above a certain tax rate, which would enable all districts taxing at a given rate to generate the same amount of funds regardless of property wealth. This proposal, which would also amend par. 18-8 of the School Code, was a relatively minor modification of the then-current state aid formula. Senate Bill 882 was sponsored by Thomas Hynes and twenty-three other Democrats with only five Democratic Senators refraining from co-sponsoring the bill. Senate Bill 882 was assigned to the Senate Education Committee, chaired by Senator Harris Fawell, a member of the School Problems Commission and a Republican from Naperville, a suburb of Chicago. House Bill 1484 was sent to the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee, chaired by Carl Soderstrom, one of the bill's co-sponsors, on April 25.

There was no further formal action on either bill until May 17 when House Bill 1484 came before the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee. After Representative Hoffman spoke for his bill, testimony for the bill was given by Alan Hickrod and Ben Hubbard. Don

Eslick testified against House Bill 1484. There was a voice vote, on which Hoffman's amendment, which was primarily a cleaning up of some language weaknesses, but which included the incorporation of the 15 percent permissive leeway provision, passed. Then Arthur Berman (Dem.-Chicago, Evanston), also a Commission member, moved that the Bakalis proposal be amended into House Bill 1484. The effect of this move, had it passed, would have been to substitute the state agency bill for Hoffman's bill. Eslick spoke for the amendment, after which it was defeated in an eleven to eleven, party-line vote, followed by the amended House Bill 1484 being voted out of committee with a DO PASS recommendation on an eighteen to two vote with three members voting present. Though the vote was strongly supportive of the Resource Equalizer Formula, questions were still asked about the Resource Equalizer concept and the specifics of the bill.

House Bill 1484 was not called for second reading until May 31, at which time the two amendments considered in committee were presented and tabled. Then Arthur Berman moved that the Bakalis bill be substituted for the Hoffman bill. The vote failed by a margin of seventy-two to ninety-one in which all but two of the seventy-two ayes were Democrats. However, sixteen of the ninety-one nays were Democrats also. As with the School Problems Commission vote on endorsement, the Democrats would have had their position adopted if a purely partisan vote had prevailed. However, Hoffman's efforts with the suburban Democrats had paid off for him and most of the sixteen Democrats who voted with the Republicans for the Resource Equalizer Formula represented suburbs of Chicago.

According to members of the legislative staff and the governor's staff, once the amendment to substitute the Bakalis bill was killed, passage of House Bill 1484 by the House was virtually assured, for if more money for schools was a goal, the Resource Equalizer bill was the only way to achieve it this session. House Bill 1484, therefore, had to be kept alive and sent to the Senate where its opponents could always try to amend it. Four other amendments to the Resource Equalizer legislation, each with legal language problems, were presented and tabled, followed by the presentation and passage of amendments 8, 9, and 10 which cleaned up the language of the bill, called for the submission of a plan for the use of the Title I money, and provided density bonus money for coterminous elementary and secondary districts, respectively. At the conclusion of the amendment process, House Bill 1484 was ordered on to third reading.

Senator Thomas Hynes hoped to get Senate Bill 882 through the Senate Education Committee at this time, but, since he did not have the votes to do so successfully, he did not even try. Subsequently, in anticipation of House Bill 1484 passing the House, Hoffman asked Senator Harris Fawell to be the Senate sponsor, and Fawell agreed. House Bill 1484 was called for third reading in the House on June 2, 1973, and passed on a vote of 135 to 2. The two dissenting votes were those of downstate representatives Michael McClain (Dem.-Quincy) and Rolland Tipsword (Dem.-Taylorville). The bill was introduced into the Senate June 2 and was sent to the Senate Education Committee on June 6. One of the legislators said that at this time Superintendent Bakalis was looking for a way to compromise the two pieces of legislation, House Bill 1484 and Senate Bill 882, for the latter had still not been passed out of the Senate Education Committee.

On June 13 the Senate Education Committee met to consider Senate Bill 882 and House Bill 1484. While testifying against House Bill 1484 and for Senate Bill 882, Don Eslick said that only high school districts would benefit from the Resource Equalizer Formula as proposed. There was an eight to five party line vote to send House Bill 1484 to the floor with a DO PASS recommendation, while Senate Bill 882 received a DO NOT PASS recommendation by the same vote.

On June 14 Fawell as chairman of the Senate Education Committee reported Senate Bill 882 to the floor with a DO NOT PASS. Hynes moved that it be advanced to second reading, a motion that was to be considered on June 19; however, nothing ever came of it. Senate Bill 882 just disappeared from the pages of the official record, indicating that the Senate leadership may have played a part in the passage of the Resource Equalizer by taking Senate Bill 882 out of the decision making arena. House Bill 1484 came to the floor of the Senate with a DO PASS from the Education Committee on the same day as Senate Bill 882.

House Bill 1484 passed the second reading in the Senate on June 19 without amendments and was ordered on to third reading. At this point the work of Don Eslick and his associates began to show results, too, as some superintendents from around the state were telling their legislators that the Resource Equalizer would not be good for unit and elementary districts. Hoffman began to consider the possibility of using a five-year phase-in period instead of a four-year one, and using a weighting for Aid to Families with Dependent Children instead of a weighting for Title I eligible pupils. He still maintained that there would be no compromise on the two bills, for he saw the choice being

between the Resource Equalizer and the old Strayer-Haig Formula.

On June 28 Fawell thought he had the required thirty votes for passage in the Senate, because he believed all thirty Republicans would vote for House Bill 1484. He called for the vote, and only twenty-eight people voted for the bill--all Republicans. Terry Bruce (Dem.-Olney) cast the only nay vote, and no one else voted. Fawell put the bill on the order of postponed consideration in order to have time to get commitments for the other two votes. He was really angry because one of the two votes he did not get was that of a Senator who apparently did not strongly object to the Resource Equalizer itself, but was settling a previous political debt and just absented himself from the chamber at the time of the vote. The second vote which was needed was that of a Senator from central Illinois who, according to some sources, had been lobbied by district superintendents of some loser districts. One legislator who supported the Resource Equalizer Formula and a member of the legislative staff noticed that this Senator also absented himself from the chamber instead of further breaking the party ranks by voting no. Charles Clabaugh went to the latter Senator and convinced him to talk with Hoffman; however, Hoffman still did not have a commitment after meeting with the Senator. The loser districts were not happy with House Bill 1484 and at the last minute were communicating with their legislators--primarily those representing central Illinois areas.

On June 29 the Democrats proposed a compromise, which included using the formula proposed by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction as the alternative instead of the old Strayer-Haig Formula. Hoffman, the chief sponsor of House Bill 1484 was strongly opposed to this

idea. The representatives of both sides met separately with Governor Walker, who expressed his concern about the cost of the Resource Equalizer and then asked the two sides to meet with each other and with the Bureau of the Budget people as his representatives to try to resolve the impasse.

The meeting took place early the morning of the last day of the legislative session, but little or nothing was accomplished. The legislators of both parties then left the Bureau of the Budget representatives and continued to meet to work out some sort of compromise. Although the Republicans thought it was possible to pass the bill without some accommodation with the Democrats, they knew that widespread support would help later if and when the appropriations were cut. Late in the morning a compromise was reached, which essentially involved providing more money for the high assessed valuation, low tax rate districts which would opt to stay on the Strayer-Haig alternative. The portions of Senate Bill 882 which were incorporated into House Bill 1484 included the provision for a .45 weighting for Title I eligible pupils to be added to the Strayer-Haig option and an increase in the add-on from 19 percent. Although the Democratic bill had called for an increase to 23 percent, the final compromise increased the add-on level to 25 percent. In addition, the appropriations legislation, Senate Bill 883, was increased by $10 million to fund these changes, making the final appropriations bill $945 million.

The amendment which incorporated the compromise provisions was drawn up and the bill went through the process in the Senate beginning with the second reading. After the third reading the final vote was forty-three to one in favor of House Bill 1484 with Terry Bruce still

opposing it. It was returned to the House for concurrence on the amendment, which it received. Finally, on July 18, 1973 Governor Daniel Walker signed into law the Illinois School finance "reform" legislation of 1973.

The bill as signed by Governor Walker consisted of the following components. There were two basic formula options, the Strayer-Haig Formula or the Resource Equalizer Formula. Under the Strayer-Haig Formula there remained (a) the $520 foundation program with qualifying rates of .90 percent for dual districts with under 100 weighted pupils, .84 percent for dual districts with 100 or more weighted pupils, and 1.08 percent for unit districts, (b) the alternative computation for districts not generating at least $120 in state aid under the foundation program, and (c) a $48 flat grant. In addition to these provisions carried over from the old formula, there was a weighting of .45 for all Title I eligible pupils and a 25 percent add-on for Strayer-Haig districts. The density bonus was allowed to remain for one year.

The other formula option, the Resource Equalizer, provided a guaranteed tax base of $42,000 per Title I weighted pupil for unit districts, $64,615 for elementary districts, and $120,000 for high school districts. It set maximum operating tax rates of 3.00 percent, 1.95 percent, and 1.05 percent for unit, elementary, and high school districts respectively.

FINDINGS

Edelman's concept of political setting was assumed to include the interrelationship of events at the national and the state level. The Serrano decision, which provided a broad setting for reform in many states, the adoption of a state income tax, and a new Constitution in Illinois, formed the framework of the relevant setting.

A favorable political climate had developed in Illinois over a period of almost ten years, during which time equalization and school finance reform had been portrayed as desirable and attainable goals. Once these ideas became ingrained, it was necessary only that the proposed formula or changes in the school finance system be framed in such a way as to make the new policy consistent with the political setting, thus assuring the policy-makers that there would be minimal opposition.

The use of language during the period of time when the setting was evolving, as well as during the time when bargaining for resources was taking place, was crucial to the power of the symbolic level of politics in this instance. Terms such as "equalization," which had many different meanings, were examples of hortatory language. In Illinois these terms were accompanied by other terms such as "equity for dual districts" and "reward for effort." Each of these words or phrases took on at least different shades of meaning depending on who was discussing them, although there was a general consensus that they were all worthy goals. The final meaning of the terms was a result of the bargaining that took place in the political arena.

The quiescence or public apathy that was exhibited in this case was evidenced among members of the general public, as well as in traditional interest groups and the Legislature. The reasons for the quiescence in the general public were that the social setting had been developing for a long period, and that the language used was so ingrained that equity and reform just seemed to be the right goals at the time.

The causes of the quiescence of most legislators are quite interesting and somewhat complicated. One explanation may be found in Rosenbaum's suggestion that two strategies were used in the Illinois Legislature when school finance laws were under consideration. The first strategy mentioned was the no-loss strategy, according to which major changes could occur only if no districts appeared to lose money. The substantive manner in which this would be accomplished was determined in the bargaining stage. Rosenbaum called the second strategy the strategy of ignorance, which existed because the specifics of school finance legislation in Illinois were (and are) so complex that for anyone to understand them a major investment of time was required. Those who understood the complex nature of problems in an area such as school finance studied the legislation, formed an opinion, and then, at least implicitly, said "trust me" to their fellow legislators. Most legislators did trust their expert colleagues, and, therefore, remained ignorant in these areas in which they could rely on another legislator's judgment.

While the professed goal of the new state aid formula was to promote equity, the term equity may be defined in a variety of ways. The analysis of financial data indicated that the professed goal of the formula

and the actual results may not necessarily have been the same thing. Although there was an improvement in some equity measures, the progress was not as great as many persons had expected. The myths associated with the 1973 Act were accepted by all of those who were involved in its passage except for the sophisticated politicians who were sensitive to the potential impact of the setting and of the language used.

The interest groups which one would expect to be involved in the bargaining for resources could be divided into several categories. One such category included statewide education interest groups. These groups, which included the Illinois Association of School Administrators, the Illinois Education Association, and the Illinois Association of School Boards, shared several common characteristics which led to their relative lack of involvement in the bargaining for resources surrounding the passage of school finance legislation in 1973. One characteristic which they shared was an interest in obtaining increased funding for public education. A second common characteristic was the presence of statewide constituencies. This was a crucial factor in their limited involvement in the passage of the Resource Equalizer Legislation. If any of the groups had taken a stand on any specific provision of the formula proposals, they would have alienated a portion of their constituency because any change in the formula helps some districts and does not help others. A third common characteristic was their growing political awareness in the late 1960's

and early 1970's. Illinois' education interest groups had traditionally been well represented on and by the School Problems Commission and therefore had a voice in the legislation which affected them. As the influence of the Commission changed, and possibly declined, the education interest groups realized that they would have to deal directly with the General Assembly on some matters. The final common element shared by these groups was their belief that the outcome of the events in 1973, was, to a degree, predictable in advance.

Edelman noted that quiescence follows the satisfaction of the primary interests of an individual or group. It therefore seems apparent that the relative lack of involvement by the three statewide interest groups which would normally take an active role in legislation of this type was largely due to the satisfaction of their primary interest in this matter, which was to obtain additional financial resources for education. These organizations were fairly certain of this occurring, so there was no need to split their constituencies by taking a firm, aggressive position on either formula proposal.

A second category of interest groups consisted of education groups with special interests. Included in this category was an organization of Chicago suburban districts known as Educational Research and Development Association (Ed-Red), a group of dual districts known as Dual-Unit Equality (DUE), the Chicago Board of Education, the Chicago Teachers Union, and what might be termed the loser districts.

Unlike the statewide education interest groups, these groups had goals which were specific to their membership. While they shared an interest in obtaining more funds for local education, they were more

concerned with representing their own interests in this matter than the interests of public education in general.

There was considerable variation in the roles that these groups played in the distribution of resources. The interests of the Chicago suburban districts and the dual districts (consisting of many of the same suburban districts) and Chicago's interests were well-represented by organized, if not hard-selling, efforts to have their interests satisfied, while many downstate unit and elementary districts which were more quiescent were not organized and did not have their interests satisfied.

A third category of interest groups consisted of the non-education interest groups. Included in this category were the Chamber of Commerce, the Taxpayers' Federation of Illinois, the Illinois Agricultural Association, and the League of Women Voters. The primary concern of three of the four groups was the amount of revenue which would be needed to fund the demands of the education community and the means by which it would be raised. The involvement of each of these groups was fairly minimal in this situation although each of the groups was interested in the outcome.

It is interesting to note the absence of a group representing the interests of the smaller unit districts and the downstate elementary districts. A number of these districts, referred to as loser districts, would have been better off with a modified Resource Equalizer Formula, particularly if it provided them with access to the entitlement guaranteed by the Formula. However, they were never successfully organized by the proponents of Senate Bill 882, even though many of the persons who were interviewed expressed the belief that the only thing that could have

defeated or caused modification of the Resource Equalizer legislation was organized opposition by the so-called loser districts. These districts, consisting primarily of downstate elementary districts and small unit districts, did not lose in an absolute sense, for the Resource Equalizer Formula as originally introduced provided for no loss of state funds for any district. Although the eleventh-hour compromise provided some increase in state funds for all districts, the loser districts still lost in a relative sense because they did not receive as much of the new money initially and over time as the districts with high tax rates, low assessed values, and high concentrations of Title I pupils.

Members of the academic community also were interested in school finance reform and were involved in the matter by serving as members of the various study groups. Alan Hickrod and Ben Hubbard, two of the university professors who were involved, were responsible for the development of the Illinois Resource Equalizer Formula.

A discussion of the bureaucratic and political figures on both sides of the issues would include the School Problems Commission, a body with a history of several decades of leadership in education legislation. Excluding its five lay members, the seventeen member commission was Democratically controlled in 1973, although the Chairman was a Republican. This body was presented with the Republican proposal for school finance reform, the Resource Equalizer Formula, and the Democratic proposal, a modification of the old Strayer-Haig Formula, made by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Commission vote to endorse the Resource Equalizer Formula was seven to six with all six nay votes cast by Democrats.

The role of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction had changed under the leadership of its chief administrator in 1973, Michael Bakalis. Bakalis, who was perceived to be an activist state superintendent, appointed Donald Eslick, his legislative liaison officer, to head the campaign to have the agency formula proposal adopted. Eslick articulated the objections to the Resource Equalizer Formula, while Gene Hoffman, the chief sponsor of the Resource Equalizer legislation, spoke for its strengths.

Most of the key decisions concerning this legislation were made by the Legislators and not by the special interest groups. The provisions of the final legislation, which were only slightly different than those of the Resource Equalizer Formula as originally introduced, were the result of a last minute political compromise that allowed the Democrats to support a Republican bill.

The role of the Governor's Office in this situation was minimal, although it might have been more significant. Had Dan Walker actively supported the bill proposed by his party, the outcome of this conflict might have been much different. However, the political incentives for the Governor to become involved were not great enough.

The final content of the Resource Equalizer legislation and the relative ease with which it was passed can be attributed to several factors. One major factor was the fact that the new formula eliminated the unpopular annual struggle over minor modifications of the Strayer-Haig formula. The lack of active involvement by the Governor in school finance legislation in 1973 also facilitated school finance reform; although it does not explain the nature of the reform. The fact that inter-party conflict was settled in the General Assembly allowed a formula to pass. Had the

partisan differences not been compromised, it is unlikely that there would have been a new formula.

Many of those interviewed perceived the Resource Equalizer to be a rational proposal, for the concept of the formula had been carefully thought out and was not merely a revision of the old Strayer-Haig Formula. The support for the formula by non-political people such as Professor Alan Hickrod and Professor Ben Hubbard, and the fact that it was perceived as a reform were also reasons for the successful passage of House Bill 1484. The new formula provided more money for all districts, although the cost was not seen as prohibitive at the time.

Most of the participants involved in the passage of this legislation did not understand it; therefore, they were put into the position of trying to ensure that their local districts received more money by relying on those legislators who had expertise in education and whom they had trusted in the past. As it turned out, the legislators who did understand school finance were split along party lines in their support of or opposition to the Resource Equalizer.

Finally, the influence of the endorsement of the Resource Equalizer Formula by the School Problems Commission should not be overlooked. The "trust me" philosophy was embodied in the Commission, and thus the members of the Legislature who served on the Commission were listened to by the rest of the lawmakers. The intriguing fact is that although the endorsement vote was close, most of the legislators did not know at the time that the Commission's membership was split in this matter; thus, the Commission's involvement was taken to mean that the whole group supported the Resource Equalizer. It was the final compromise, which

insured more money for everyone, that made it virtually impossible to oppose this formula.

An analysis of the financial impact of the change in the state aid formula for the first two years of its implementation was revealing. In one sense the Resource Equalizer had fulfilled the expectations of the myth, for it had moved the state towards fiscal neutrality by providing a guaranteed tax base for districts with low assessed values per pupil, thereby removing the direct wealth-quality relationship. Where the reality contrasted most with the myth was in the realization that this change did not necessarily help the neediest districts or communities, because many of the districts which benefited from the Resource Equalizer's provisions were high income, high expenditure districts. Few would argue that these districts should lose state funds but the need for additional funds did not result primarily from the quality of their programs or the needs of their students. Some low to moderate income and low to moderate expenditure districts were not helped as much as the aforementioned districts by the Resource Equalizer Formula because they are located in communities that could not or would not pay the higher taxes generated by the high tax rates required by the Resource Equalizer Formula in order for a district to receive the maximum entitlement from the formula. Tables 1 and 2, comparing the distribution of general state aid in 1972-73 with that in 1973-74, and categorized by region and by district type, show the gains and losses of each of these entities. The large gains made by Chicago, the Chicago suburbs and secondary districts are clearly indicated. The increases going to Southern Illinois, the only entity which received increased state funds as a result of the needs of the area and not their political

TABLE 1

GENERAL STATE AID BY REGION

Region	1972-1973 Average State Aid Per Pupil	1972-1973 Percentage of Total State Aid	1974-1975 Average State Aid Per Pupil	1974-1975 Percentage of Total State Aid	Percentage Increase
Southern Illinois	425 (12)*	15	582 (12)	15	37
Central Illinois	287 (16)	16	357 (16)	13	24
Northwestern Illinois	310 (10)	10	398 (10)	9	29
Northeastern Illinois	282 (2)	2	354 (2)	1	26
Chicago	407 (23)	25	660 (22)	28	62
Chicago Suburbs	295 (37)	31	417 (38)	33	41

*Figures in parentheses are percentages of total student population.

TABLE 2

GENERAL STATE AID BY TYPE OF DISTRICT

Type of District	1972-1973 Average State Aid Per Pupil	1972-1973 Percentage of Total State Aid	1974-1975 Average State Aid Per Pupil	1974-1975 Percentage of Total State Aid	Percentage Increase
Elementary	315 (26)*	24	427 (25)	23	35
Secondary	210 (12)	7	348 (13)	8	66
Unit (except Chicago)	367 (39)	44	461 (40)	41	27
Chicago	407 (23)	25	660 (22)	28	62

*Figures in parentheses are proportion of total student population.

influences, are only slightly lower than the increases for the Chicago suburban areas. In general, this reform resulted more from the political power distribution in this state than from the financial characteristics of the districts, for the areas which benefited most were those with organized and well-informed representations of their interests. The primary winners were the Chicago suburban districts, the city of Chicago, and the high school districts around the state.

In brief, therefore, the answers to the two central questions to which this study was addressed are the following: (1) The reform took place when it did because the political setting or climate was right for reform. The consciousness of education policy-makers had been raised by events occurring at the state and national levels. Thus, reform of school finance was perceived to be right and proper. (2) The substance of the reform reflected an interaction of (a) the desire to provide equity in taxation for schools and equity in the distribution of these funds with (b) the political power structure in the state but the latter was the more influential factor.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusions and implications resulting from the study include the following:

(1) Education finance is not exempt from partisan politics.

(2) Satisfying the desires of Chicago is a necessary, if not sufficient, step for passage of school finance legislation.

(3) The diversity of the state and the needs and desires expressed by different parts of the state can render state-wide interest groups virtually helpless and can magnify the effect of small, vocal, organized, special interest groups.

(4) Rosenbaum's notions that a strategy of ignorance and a no-loss strategy can help explain the behavior of the Illinois General Assembly seem to be supported by this study.

(5) The roles of the School Problems Commission, the Governor, and the state education agency are determined in large part by the person(s) holding the leadership positions in each office.

(6) Conscious planning regarding the needs and desires of interested parties prior to the formulation of a state aid formula or in conjunction with the development of such a formula reduces the objections to the plan.

(7) The generation of revenues for schools is closely related to the distribution of money for schools.

(8) Data examined in this study lend strong support to Murray Edelman's notions that there are at least two levels of political activity, namely the symbolic level and the level of bargaining for tangible resources.

(9) The language used at both levels of political action is a crucial factor in the outcome of the policy-making process.

(10) The results of this study lend support to Berke's position that several conditions, such as support from key legislators, extra money in the state treasury, and concern for the big cities, are usually present when major change is made in the method of financing education in a given state.

(11) The existence and importance of philosophical differences, varying definitions of key words, and differing goals and values in school finance policy-making were made clear in this study.

(12) Knowledge is power. A small group with access to accurate information is more likely to have its interests satisfied than a larger group with less detailed, more general information.

The implications of this study are:

(1) A provision for local tax relief will be of assistance in passing any school finance package, for it will satisfy those groups opposed to the higher state taxes which usually occur to fund a new state aid formula.

(2) More policy-makers have to understand the formula.

(3) It is important for parties interested in bringing about major changes in Illinois education finance policy to be aware that the presence of certain conditions, such as support from key legislators, and sufficient state money to finance a major change, are likely to provide a supportive environment for changes in this policy area. These parties should be prepared to attempt policy changes when these conditions are present.

(4) Further research needs to be conducted to determine the present roles, spheres of influence, and the balance of power between the School Problems Commission and the newly created State Board of Education.

In summary, while this study was in large part an historical one, it has numerous implications for education policy making. Those persons desiring to bring about major reform in the distribution of state funds for education in Illinois and other states should be aware of the fact that the issue is a political one and that, as a result, certain ideas from the political science literature can be useful in making successful changes in this area. The language used for the general public and unenlightened legislators, as well as that for the school people, should be chosen very carefully, for the language used can ease the legislation through the political process or inhibit its passage. At the same time the language should reflect reality; otherwise, expectations will be formed which may not subsequently be met.

Notes

[1]The basic purpose of the Strayer-Haig formula was to provide a method of state financing of local school systems which would treat both taxpayers and students in an equitable manner. It proposed the establishment of a state-wide minimum educational program called the foundation level to be supported by combined state and local resources. The Strayer-Haig formula also called for the state to set a minimum, or "qualifying," tax rate which must be attained by each district that wanted to participate in the equalization program. The state would then provide the difference between the foundation level and the amount raised locally by the use of the qualifying rate by each district. For example, if the state foundation level was $500 per pupil, and the qualifying rate was one percent, the local community with a per pupil assessment of $20,000 would raise $200 per pupil and the state would provide the remaining $300 per pupil in the form of general state aid.

[2]The Illinois version of the district power equalizing model attempted to guarantee fiscal neutrality or equal yield for equal effort. This latter provision was intended to stimulate tax increases in areas where the property value and the taxes were very low and where more money could be used for the schools. It guaranteed a larger total amount of revenue for each one cent tax increase than many districts could have received for the same increase without the guararteed assessed valuation.

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